EUGENE WILLIAM LYMAN LECTURE

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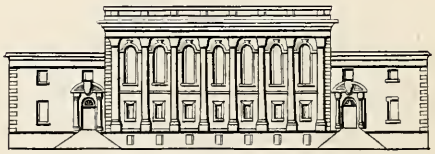

EUGENE WILLIAM LYMAN LECTURE

SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE

SWEET BRIAR, VIRGINIA

FEBRUARY, 1949

"THE DEEPER RANGES OF AUTHORITY"

EUGENE WILLIAM LYMAN LECTURE

IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Delivered by

JULIUS SEELYE BIXLER, Ph.D., D.D., LL.D.
President, Colby College

SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE

Sweet Briar, Virginia

FEBRUARY 4, 1949

The Lyman Lectureship was established at Sweet Briar College in 1948, in loving memory of one of the world's great souls and great teachers, Eugene William Lyman. Dr. Lyman lived at Sweet Briar from the time of his retirement from Union Theological Seminary until his death eight years later. It is the hope of friends and admirers of Dr. Lyman that this Lectureship might fittingly honor his memory by carrying forward his lifelong and devoted quest for truth. President Seelye Bixler of Colby College, once a student of Dr. Lyman's, presented the first Lyman Lecture at Sweet Briar on February 4, 1949.

MARTHA B. LUCAS,
President, Sweet Briar College.

THE DEEPER RANGES OF AUTHORITY

Julius Seelye Bixler, Ph.D., D.D., LL.D.
President, Colby College, Waterville, Maine

The occasion which brings us together is a sad one, because it commemorates the passing of a man we loved. It is, however, also one of hope because of our pride in him and our conviction of both the excellence and the permanence of the principles in which he believed. If, asks Thackeray, we still love those we lose, shall we wholly lose those we love? And if we take time to renew our confidence in the ideas for which they stood shall we not insure their continued presence?

The delivery of the first Eugene William Lyman Lecture at Sweet Briar should be a time when we remind ourselves what good will combined with intelligence can do and also how much our own efforts to make these two qualities prevail must depend on the foundations laid by persons of Professor Lyman's type. You may be sure that it is a particular pleasure for me to be with you on such an occasion of remembrance and renewal. Dr. Lyman was not only my friend and counselor but in a special sense he was the kind of person whom I should most like to imitate. As you are aware, he was a great teacher. He knew his stuff and he knew his students and he was able to bring them together creatively in that elusive process we call education. He had both learning and love and an unusual ability to combine them in a productive way.

I need not speak to you in detail of his warm human qualities for he lived here and you could feel them for yourselves. But I should like to mention one of his professional traits that always impressed me. He was one of the founders of the American Theological Society and by the time I began coming to its meetings he was numbered among its Elder Statesmen. As such he was frequently the first critic on his feet after a paper had been read. I recall especially the vigor and incisiveness with which he would expose the errors of his opponent. These qualities were the more noteworthy because of the kindness and sympathy, already alluded to, that he showed as a person. Warm human interest was accompanied, in his case, by no weak or indulgent tolerance. He knew what he believed and why and he was ready at all times to justify the faith that was in him.

In this memorial lecture I should like to deal with an idea which bears on Professor Lyman's combination of personal and intellectual traits and helps to illustrate the strength of the liberal point of view he espoused. We are constantly told today that we are approaching the end of an era of reasonableness and optimism. The cult of the "daemonic" in contemporary theology, the use of distortion in modern art, and the retreat of modern literature into the unconscious are evidence of a widespread belief that the mind cannot face up to the problems of present-day life but must meet irrationalism by capitulating to it. "Liberal religion" is said to be a contradiction in terms. Faith is urged to confront the violence of the times by seeking new compulsions of its own instead of yielding longer to the hope that the democratic and peaceful arts of persuasion will bear away the victory.

I hope I am making a comment of which Professor Lyman would approve when I say that many of these

criticisms show a complete misunderstanding of what liberalism is all about. For example, I think it is a mistake when an author, in a recent influential book, sets orthodox Christianity on one side and fascism, communism, and liberalism on the other, as if these latter three could be grouped together in their common opposition to Christian faith. What is called the "liberal-optimistic" view is not an "ideology," to use the popular modern word, as fascism and communism are, nor is it a creed to be set over against religion. It is merely the belief that if we can arrange the facts coherently we shall go places in our thinking, whether the subject matter is religion or anything else. Its confidence and so-called "optimism" is simply that of the person who holds that valid reasoning will lead to valid conclusions, and those who attack it make use of the same premise.

Now, surely, religion is not exempt from thought. The only chance for a difference of opinion comes over the question what happens when feeling, as it must in art, religion, and elsewhere, goes beyond thought. Whether you accept it or not, the liberal position here is clear. It is, first, that wherever faith makes statements about matters that thought can check, thought is the final judge of correctness, and second, wherever it goes beyond thought, it must do so in a way which supplements and amplifies thought instead of denying it. Psychologically if not politically speaking we live in one world. The standards which undergird experience may apply differently in different areas, but the standards themselves are the same. Otherwise we should have no real means of judging what is good to live by nor should we be able to keep our mental health.

If, then, the present critics whom we call the neo-orthodox would content themselves with asking for reason plus better and deeper feeling, and would show

us where such feeling is to be found, we could meet them on a common basis of understanding. It is because they keep insisting that there is something fundamentally perverse about the appeal to reason in religion, saying, for example, that it brings with it a sinful element of pride of possessiveness, that they become confusing. In their efforts to explain how far religion must go beyond what they call "moralism" and "humanism" they come dangerously near to the claim that religion is not really concerned with what is either moral or human. Accordingly I want to take a so-called moralistic definition of religion and to ask you whether it really does lack depth. I should like you to consider the famous definition of religion offered by the prophet Micah in the seventh century B. C. "What doth the Lord require of thee," you will remember that Micah cried, "but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Not many weeks ago one of my friends remarked in conversation: "If the churches have no more to offer than these words of Micah they will do well to close their doors entirely." His point was of course that the distinctively religious element is lacking. At about the time of this conversation I read a review of a recent book on the Old Testament prophets. "The writer states their process of reasoning," said the reviewer, "but the powerful act of God is not brought home to the reader." The book fails to show, the reviewer continued, that it was the experience in which they were "taken hold of by God himself in a forceful way" that made the prophets important.

The comment set me to wondering. "How can God take hold of us in a forceful way?" I asked myself, "if not through reasonable ideas reinforced by the feelings that our human relationships have shown to be good?

That God is not the same as human beings is clear. But can reason and love be essentially different for him from what they are for us? Does not the real religious insight of the prophets come from their awareness of the deeper ranges of the authority that these qualities themselves can be shown to have?"

With this question in mind let us look at Micah's idea of religion. First of all we notice that he offers some general rules—do justly, he says, love mercy—and this gives us pause, for generalities are out of favor in our present intellectual climate. The neo-orthodox, following Kierkegaard, keep insisting that generalized abstractions are but an excuse for decision and action. They are joined in the attack by a host of critics with long and forbidding names—we call them semanticists, positivists, pragmatists, and operationalists—all of whom press upon us the advantages of the specific and the concrete. Of what use, they cry with one voice, is it for Micah to say let justice be done, when the real question is: What particular acts does justice require? How, for example, does one deal justly with the obstructive tactics of Soviet diplomats at Lake Success? And what does it mean to love mercy if you are at war? Again, is it meaningful to ask us both to do justly and to love mercy when everyone knows that one may cancel out the other? As for "walking humbly with God," the phrase is preposterously vague until we know more about what God himself is like.

Obviously the criticism has some merit. We face many situations where the real difficulty is to know not what principle to adopt but how to use the principles we have. And in a scientific age like our own an abstract idea like "justice" has some trouble in establishing its own status. It is not an empirical datum. We cannot see, touch, or feel it. We are unable to take it into the laboratory or

to assign it a place in our knowledge of the physical world. Yet there are certain things it does accomplish for us. It serves as a reminder of a type of action that we have reflectively chosen as good. It stands for a quality that fits reasonably into its place with other considered standards for conduct. And, as Professor Lyman points out in one of his books, although in a given situation it may not itself present new facts it does point to the place where such facts will be found. It will not always tell us exactly what to do but it will tell us where to go to find out what to do. In this way it represents an idea that occupies a permanent place in the list of what has rightful authority over us. As I shall try to explain more fully later, justice is always better than injustice in the same sense in which coherence is better than incoherence.

Micah's appeal to justice, then, was to that which though it may itself have no power must itself be invoked, along with something else, such as specific knowledge, if a social issue of a certain sort is to be settled rightly. His appeal to so abstract a conception in the name of God was, further, to suggest that God's authority is of the kind that the rational mind recognizes. For we should notice that it is characteristic of rationality to respond to general rules as such. We see this most easily when we contrast human with subhuman experience. To an animal, for example, an object is something to be seized or avoided, an immediate stimulus to appetite or to fear. Like an animal, primitive man appears also to live much of the time in the world of the here and now. If we read the record rightly he finds his first glimmerings of another world in his experience of the tabu which tells him that something must *never* be done, and that a certain type of act is *always* wrong. The tabu is often criticized by modern scholars because it is so very general and so free from any taint

of the specific. It applies to all kinds of acts and objects, good and bad alike, and seems often to be lost in a haze of non-moral obscurity. Yet actually it is its freedom from limitation to any one time or occasion and its appeal to the general rule that provides it with both rational and moral significance. For it is the reference to the universal that marks the early dawning of the rational approach to life. The rational mind alone is able to free itself from enslavement to what is here and now. It alone is able to recognize the binding force of that which is everywhere and always true. Generality, that is to say, is one mark of rationality. Micah's appeal to general truths in the name of God may thus be interpreted as insight on his part into the fact that the authority of reason and that of religion have at least one element in common. To say that God requires men always to act justly is to say that God's commands use the form that only a rational mind can recognize.

The first point to notice is, then, that Micah's use of general statements is not necessarily a way of evading decisions but is evidence of his belief that whatever else God may be, he is Lord of the realm of mind. Let us note, secondly, that in his stress on justice Micah chooses a particularly apt illustration, for of all values justice most resembles reason in the type of authority on which it rests. To see why this is so, let us turn to the prophet by whose views of justice Micah was undoubtedly influenced. Shortly before Micah the prophet Amos came from Tekoa to tell the priests at Bethel how far they had strayed from the path to God. Amos was a man of passion but he was no fanatic. It is true that he described his call to be a prophet as a sudden overpowering feeling. "The lion hath roared," he said, to illustrate the irresistible quality of God's message, "who (then) will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" At first this sounds like the emotional

assurance of dogmatism. But as we examine Amos's teaching we see that what lay back of these words was a conviction of the demonstrable rightness of the rational view. The prophet was indeed "taken hold of by God in a forceful way," to use the expression of the reviewer quoted above, but the ultimate source of God's power, as Amos saw it, was not arbitrary.

Consider the musical form his words take. "Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock." "Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes, yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?" This, I submit, is the song of a musician. For an unlettered herdsman whom God called as he followed the flock the continuous flow of these harmonious cadences is remarkable. Amos was primarily a poet, with a poet's sense for balanced form. He could not have prophesied as he did if he had not had an artist's feeling for the demands of proportion and rhythm.

Now let us press this point a step further. Was it not this same feeling for balance in the arrangement of the parts in the social organism that influenced his sensitiveness to the demand of God for justice? He inveighed against ritual, but it was not ritual as such that bothered him. What was wrong was the use of ritual to enhance the power of the few at the expense of the many and to throw the social scales out of line. "I hate, I despise your feast days," said God as Amos heard him. The reason was not that feasts or sabbaths or new moons

were bad in themselves but that some people had used them as a means to curry special favor with the divine. In Amos's time the sacred had come to be identified with that which was out of the ordinary. It was the unusual day such as the Sabbath, the man with unusual clothing such as the priest, the unusual experience such as the prophetic seizure, the unusual and untestable vision of the irrational dogmatist which proclaimed the presence of God. You may recall that in Elijah's time this went so far that on occasions religion was completely divorced from ethics and God was even supposed to have sent to Ahab's court a lying prophet, whose sacredness consisted merely in his insane frenzy.

Amos saw that this was wrong not only because it undermined men's ideas of integrity but because it identified God's ways with the life of the favored few. He proclaimed justice because, opposed to this, it represented a universal human value in which all men, if they would, could participate. Justice for him as for Plato meant the harmonious functioning of all groups and therefore the health of society. Indeed, Amos's passion for what is universal drove him to what for his contemporaries must have been a desperately radical conclusion. "Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me?" he heard God say. "Have I not brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? *and* the Philistines from Caphtor, *and* the Syrians from Kir?" Don't trade any more on your special relations with God, for other nations have been chosen as well as you. God's will works without favoritism and in accordance with a consistent formal pattern.

This, I would urge, is an appeal to the idea of a fair and harmonious balance in society. Amos is reaching back for his final authority to that which lifts men above pride of race, sect, or creed and binds them together in

a consistent and organic unity as sons of a common father. Long before the exponents of the gospel of blood, race, and soil, he showed how absurd it would be, religiously as well as rationally, to limit virtue to any one group or to make such preposterous distinctions as that between non-Aryan and Aryan science. The family of nations is one and it is its participation in a common life of reason that makes it one. God himself is revealed in the universals men share, not in the particulars that divide them from each other.

We have been using Amos as an illustration of the fact that the conviction that God works through prophetic inspiration need not be opposed to the belief of the liberal that religious emotion supplements thought and does not contradict it. We have been saying that God's authority, in the sense of that which has legitimate control, is incontestable just as is reason. Amos's protest against all that is special or provincial and his appeal to the universal and balanced whole which expresses itself in the poetic demand for form is, I would affirm, essentially the same as the appeal to the rationally coherent and balanced scheme that the liberal sees as his court of last resort. Even if you have come with me sympathetically thus far, however, I can imagine your saying that now the pay-off is due. For have I not been suggesting that Amos's God was after all merely a formal pattern somewhat like a Platonic essense? Isn't the appeal to reason nothing but the appeal to a relation that is mental rather than actual? And isn't this the glaring defect of all liberal views—that they make God not a reality but a form or an idea? Did not Plato himself see that God must be the Demiourgos as well as the Idea of the Good? How can a principle or pattern of consistency have any of the effectiveness and power that must be attributed to God or play any part in the world of nature and fact?

Amos's own answer is of course clear and can be briefly stated. God for him was an irresistible force at work both in nature and in history. "Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth." The rhythms of nature to Amos are tremendously impressive. But he saw the same force at work in history in the same inevitable way. "Let judgment roll down as waters," he said, "and righteousness as a mighty stream." As inexorable as gravitation itself is the operation of the moral law. The Chinese have expressed a similar idea in their saying that the great Tao or way of nature becomes in history the Teh or the law of righteousness among men.

But to quote Amos here is not necessarily to answer the liberal's critic. Amos unquestionably felt the power of God in the affairs of men and in his own heart. Does the liberal feel it also? Does he identify himself with it as did the prophets? The liberal, at least so his critics affirm, finds a God who answers questions rather than a God who impels men to action. Is not this God of truth merely one who uses persuasion, and do not the times cry out for a God of sterner stuff? Does not the liberal, after all, live merely in a world of dreams? Everyone knows that men have ideas of God. What everyone wants to know is whether these ideas stand for a force that is actively at work.

Here we face one of those philosophical questions that seem to be endless and we can hope only to offer one or two hints toward an answer. I think it can be said first of all, however, that if the liberal has trouble explaining how a God whose authority is that of reason can work in nature and in history, his opponent is in no better

position. No theologian, whatever his shade of opinion, finds it easy to show just why God does what he does. In his attack on the problem the liberal would begin I think, by pointing to the fact that whatever else is true of the evolutionary process and of the power by which it has been made to unfold, at least it does not contradict the idea that influencing the various parts of the world of nature and guiding their growth is a form-bringing tendency. From the gravitational and electro-magnetic fields on the physical level, on through the periodicity of the elements in chemistry and the remarkable properties of the biological organism, this form-bringing trend has conducted evolution to the point where it has produced the marvelous flexibility of the human brain and nervous system. The next step, which seems to be so desperately hard to take, is toward a social organization of nations under one supreme authority. What we seem to see all along the line is an influence like that of ideas. The trend is toward a formal pattern which becomes ever more complex but continues to show the balanced consistency characteristic of reason.

We next confront the difficult question why a God of reason permits so large a degree of unreason and a God of justice allows injustice on so terrifying a scale. Again we find ourselves in the presence of one of those questions that have aroused interminable controversy and we must be content with a brief suggestion. But how, let us ask, could reason and justice be expected to work in history? Amos's figure was somewhat inexact—was it not?—when he suggested that judgment should roll down as waters. In the nature of the case we should not expect it to be like a physical force, for if it were inevitable it could not be justice. The difference is that between a mechanical and a reasonable sequence. The planets move automatically by gravitational pull. This means that they cannot make mistakes. Wherever they

are it is "right" or correct or appropriate that they be there, in the only sense in which right can be applied to them.

But with rational minds the case is completely different. They can make mistakes. They can go to places where it is not right for them to be. Yet the fact that they can wander makes their achievement when they do go straight of incomparably greater significance. Men, in other words, are free. Freedom, however, as we examine it, does not mean the ability to flout the authority of reason but on the contrary to recognize and abide by it.

Reason's influence on men, like God's, is compulsive not as gravitation is compulsive but as the lure of the ideal, by a strange paradox, is irresistible for the truly free mind. Its control is not that of a force in nature, yet it does have its own type of inescapability. Actually no one denies reason. Why not? Simply because to attempt to deny it is merely to reaffirm it, for the opponent of reason cannot open his mouth to confute it without presupposing its rules. Reason forms an undeniable and unavoidable background for freedom. In this sense it is an absolute authority. We may flout it in our actions but when we do it is we who have failed, not reason itself.

Is not the same true of justice? Amos, for his part, was sure that it was effectively at work in history to destroy the erring nation. We find it hard to share his confidence. The wicked prosper regularly and the righteous have suffered altogether too much for us to accept this faith without demurring. But actually the influence of justice does not rest on its ability to keep men from being unjust any more than that of reason comes from its power to prevent the irrational. Justice

is a standard for action. We believe that we see its power increasing as, in spite of various setbacks, we observe over the centuries a trend toward greater sensitiveness to form. But it exerts no mechanical or inevitable attraction, for if it did it would cease to be what it is.

If then we are seeking an analogy by which we may hope to understand the type of authority that God has for us it still would appear that Amos and the liberal, with their examples of justice and reason, are on the right track. It is hard to see how God's authority can be arbitrary, or "above" or independent of them. That way lies a type of chaos from which both mind and conscience shrink. At the same time it seems that both justice and reason and our attitude toward them illustrate the combination of inevitability and freedom that is characteristic of religion.

Now let us turn to another criticism of a rational faith. Sometimes both justice and reason have been interpreted so narrowly and pragmatically as to make them unfit for religious treatment. It is said of both that they are merely tools that have worked well in enabling the individual or the group in society to get what it wants. Justice is claimed by some to be merely a convenient device which one tribe hit upon to provide for harmony in its own inner workings and which therefore promoted its survival. It is argued similarly that reason is but an instrument in the competitive struggle which has been looked up to because it worked well in satisfying desires.

Opposed to this is what seems to me the profounder view that although they have satisfied the desire to survive they are to be valued not on that account but because there is about them something which is inherently satisfactory. Justice should be obeyed because it

is justice, not because it is useful or pleasant. Reason does help us to get our own way, yet this is not its real significance. Essentially it provides us with abstract ideas which, as we saw before, relieve us from the thralldom of the here and now. It gives us the universality and necessity of logic with its rules that everywhere and in all circumstances are valid. It introduces us to the irresistible claim of that network of relations we call coherent. In this way it opens our eyes to the demands of an intrinsic value, an end in itself whose worth we are unable to question or deny and whose claim we recognize even when we think we flout it. Because it confronts us with this final authority we can only say that it brings us into the presence of God.

This, to me, is the real strength of the liberal position. For the liberal, God's authority must be that of reason wherever reason is relevant. And although there are some areas of experience, such as art, where its procedures are not alone pertinent for decisions about value, there is no point at which it may with impunity be contradicted or denied. Reasoning means the collecting of facts and the careful analyzing of their formal relations. Now obviously life is much more than this. Just as obviously God is more than an intellectual God and religion is more than the art of learning. But we have only to see in what this "more" consists to understand how continuous is the line which leads from the standards that determine reasonableness to those upon which emotional validity depends, from truth as a balanced coherence of data to justice as a harmonious ordering of demands and to beauty as a rhythmic pattern of motifs. Reason's forms are abstract. They fairly ache to be filled in with the warm content of human feeling. As if the muse of history sensed this and wished to clothe with living flesh the bare bones of Amos's thought, there appeared in Amos's own century his remarkable younger

contemporary Hosea. "What doth the Lord require of thee," you will recall that Micah asked, "but to do justly and love mercy?" As unforgettable as Amos's description of the law of justice is Hosea's account of what mercy means.

To read Hosea is to realize that his revolt against the view of religion as the property of a special group is as marked as in the case of Amos, although his approach is totally different. Amos dealt with abstract form; Hosea examines palpitating feeling in all its agony. Where Amos's imagination roamed over the wide sweep of nature and history, Hosea probes the depths of the individual human heart. Amos's vision is broader, but the insight of Hosea goes deeper. Amos is like the scientist in the general conclusions he draws from watching particular events in nature. Hosea is like the artist in his ability to see in the single instance what is characteristic of the universal. Amos appeals to the rule of reason, Hosea to the most intimate of emotional experiences—that of family life. We should notice also that Hosea uses for his illustration the experience where reason is most completely at a discount and stark passion most completely in control—that of infidelity in marriage. According to his own story Hosea found that his wife was unfaithful, yet to his amazement he loved her still, and with God's blessing took her back. In this he saw a symbol of the union which no man can sunder. As he touched bedrock in his own emotions he discovered not what was peculiar to himself but what was basic for all human life. Notice the means of approach he used in talking to his people. I speak to you, he said in effect, not from a special office, not as prophet or priest or prince—though he might have claimed to be all three—not even as Jew, on the basis of our favored experience as a chosen people, but rather as husband and father and therefore as man to man. I am talking, he con-

tinued to say in effect, out of the background of the family relation into which all men are born and to which they belong just because they are men. I say to you that just as surely as men love they must suffer, but that this suffering need not lead to private grief or to the exclusiveness of despair. Accepted in the right spirit it brings insight into the qualities that bind men to each other and to their God. Suffering must characterize the experience of God himself if he is a God of love. It is in suffering that we enter into our neighbor's mind and see most clearly the nature of him in whom we live and move. As the Spanish philosopher Unamuno said, many centuries later, "Suffering is that which unites all living beings together; it is the universal or divine blood that flows through us all."

If you have read *The Green Pastures* you may recall the place where the Lord comes down from heaven to watch the siege of Jerusalem and to talk with the defenders of the city. On one of the fortifications he finds a non-Biblical and non-historical but very real character named Hezdrel and asks for whom he is fighting. Hezdrel replies that he and the others are fighting for the God of Hosea, the God of love who suffers with his people, and that he has little interest in the older God of wrath. I think the author is right in emphasizing that this is a new God. The old God of Moses was not strictly a God of love, nor was he a God who suffered, and he was certainly a God of one particular tribe. As the Hebrew genius explored the possibilities of this problem it developed ideas which were new and must have seemed revolutionary but which have stood up under the test of time. Amos was only one of several who were groping for the idea of a universal God. He reached it through his passion for common justice. Hosea represents a different group, but its influence was to be as lasting. Dean Inge has said that Christianity was the first of

the great religions to make the notion of suffering part of its conception of the divine. But it seems fair to say that for Christianity this was an inheritance from Hosea and later from Jeremiah. It was apparently Hosea who saw that a God who loves and suffers and by that fact is himself limited can be a companion to man in a much deeper sense than the old omnipotent God of creation. It was Hosea also who saw that this insight was reached through an understanding of suffering love as the common lot of man.

Amos and Hosea together exemplify not only the appeal to what is universal as the true basis of religion but also the polarity of life as it takes account now of one goal, now of another that supplements it. Justice and mercy, we are often told, are antithetical. If you seek one you must neglect the other. Yet actually we must combine them and this means, as I see it, that we believe in first determining what is theoretically just and then, as we treat the particular case, taking its special circumstances into account. In the process of knowledge we find a similar alternation. As the rationalists have shown we seek, on the one hand, the clear outlines of logical analysis. But as we do so we leave the flux of empirical phenomena behind. To this we must return if experience is not to be barren. We cannot remain with the rational pattern of Descartes, for this would mean dalliance in the realm of the abstractly formal. But no more can we spend all our time with Bergson's passing show of phenomena, for while concepts without precepts are empty, percepts without concepts are blind. Similarly in religion, as the mystics have always told us, we should follow the rhythm which leads from the mount of vision to the practical act of healing and back again. I am inclined to think that especially in a time of widespread suffering like the present, we need to take account of another type of

rhythm occurring in the inner currents of the stream of consciousness. It has to do with our relation to the fact of pain in the world at large. We seek peace of mind for ourselves and the search seems wholly natural and good. Yet we cannot attain it except by leaving suffering behind. A certain kind of forgetfulness of the world's agony is needed, it would seem, if we would keep our sanity. The forgetfulness, however, may not be permanent. To suffering we must return, not only as an experience in itself, but as a datum for reflection and a theme to ponder.

What doth the Lord require of us, then, but to do justly with Amos, and to love mercy with Hosea? As for walking humbly with God, who can help us to understand this better than the prophet who followed Amos and Hosea and was Micah's older contemporary, namely the great Isaiah? Isaiah knew better than most people the meaning of humility before God because his own conception of it went through such a radical change. You may recall that in the sixth chapter of the book that bears his name he tells of seeing the Lord high and lifted up, surrounded by seraphim who cried "Holy, Holy, Holy." As he gazed the posts of the door moved and the house was filled with smoke. To us seraphim and cherubim are pleasant little cupids or angels, suggesting nothing else than what is lovely and of good report. We must remember, however, that for a Jew of the eighth century B. C. seraphs and cherubs were monstrous creatures in every sense of the word. They were both huge and abnormal, with human heads, animal bodies, and menacing wings. Furthermore, the word "holy" meant not righteous and good, as it does to us, but apart, mysterious and terrifying. What the seraphs really cried, therefore, was "Tabu, Tabu, Tabu." Isaiah's response was that of primitive man who feels he has looked upon the sacred object and therefore cannot live.

"Woe is me," he said, "for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." His meaning of course was that he had not gone through the proper ritual to enable him to stand in the presence of the literally awful religious object whose authority was based on fear of the mysterious unknown. Then comes a change almost startling in its completeness. It took hundreds of years for his countrymen to accomplish it, but Isaiah talks as though it happened to him in the twinkling of an eye. His way of expressing it is to say that a seraph touched his lips with a live coal from the altar. At once his fear was changed to confidence. Immediately he saw that this was a God he could understand and could serve with love. When, therefore, God said "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" his response was that of a loyal follower: "Here am I, send me."

This change from fear to loyal devotion must have come from the realization that God confronts man not as the unknown confronts the known or the irrational the rational, but rather as the moral ideal in its perfection confronts man's limited moral strivings. In the presence of the unknown—or that which once again some of our contemporaries are calling the "Wholly-Other"—our response is that of grovelling fear. But to the lure of the moral ideal, although we recognize its distinction from us and the tremendous gap between it and our imperfection, our attitude is that of trusting obedience. Perhaps modern art presents us with its own monstrosities because it wants us to use them as stepping stones to what is nearer and more intelligible and in the belief that our experience of what is near will be richer if we have first experienced what is foreign and far away. In religion it seems to be true that the far and the near alternate, for both mystery and value have their appeal. But the mystery yields finally to the value

because it is the value, after all, that is rationally significant. God is greater than we and we dwell on that fact when we contemplate the mystery that attends the holy of holies. But the greatness is of a sort we know and respect and find good. His difference is not in kind or such as to put him and our whole relation to him completely beyond our powers of comprehension. If God is the rational and ethical ideal, we can, however imperfectly, make his will our own and can cooperate, however unworthily, in the effort to carry out his purpose. This kind of humility we can understand.

It seems to me, therefore, that Micah's combination of Amos's passion for justice, Hosea's love of mercy, and Isaiah's sensitiveness to humility gives us a definition of religion which satisfies the profound demands of feeling without violating the exacting claims of rational consistency. When we study comparative literature we sometimes hear it said that Sanskrit is a language of independent clauses connected by "ands" and that this is significant of Hindu indifference to the processes of history. Hindu myths unfold in recurrent cycles or in dreams of the god Brahman where ideas all have the same status, there are no subordinate clauses, and development or progress in time has no meaning. Similarly it is often said of both the Hebrew language and the Hebrew mind that they are geared to history and to the unfolding in time of an evolutionary sequence. At first glance this definition of Micah's may seem to belong in the Sanskrit rather than the Hebrew way of looking at things. Its commands seem connected only by the conjunction "and" as if they were a series of static and independent timeless essences unrelated to the struggle to which life in this world has made us accustomed.

But even so brief an analysis as the one we have just made is enough to show that this view of religion does

not stand apart from the stream of history. It was forged in the fires of actual experience. It represents the crystallization of feelings that have faced up to the ultimate crises of life and death. One moral is that we should not too quickly condemn as evasive all appeals to general conceptions and to definitions in universal terms. The liberal's eagerness to put matters in rational form may be abused, and we must always be on our guard against the lure of the armchair kind of philosophy. But our willingness to shoulder the moral responsibilities that are rightfully ours should not make us blind to the equally rightful distinctions of the intellect. A large part of life is given over, in the nature of the case, to emotions of horror and despair, and to the sympathy and faith which they call forth. But surely God himself, if he is a God in any intelligible sense, would not have these emotions endured without the saving grace of the appeal to balanced, harmonious and consistent form on which it has been the liberal's virtue to insist. However irrational in the sense of outrageous the conditions of life seem to be, the attempt to understand it rationally remains a duty; however sordid the materials with which it works, the effort of art to reconstruct it remains a joy.

When Micah asks what the Lord requires, what then does he think that the word "requires" itself implies? Justice is required and mercy and humility,—why? Because God as an infinite and sovereign will says so? I cannot believe that this is an answer. Because our conscience and such ethical sensitiveness as we have demand it? Yes, this comes nearer, but is this all? I think that we are closest to the heart of our problem when we say that God requires of us what he does because God, whatever else he is, must be the Rational Good and because rationality in the sense of the demand

for consistency is the basic characteristic of any universe we can know. To deny reason is to presuppose it; to deny a rational God is to presuppose him. Amos saw this, though his picture was drawn to represent justice rather than reason. For as one studies him it becomes clear that justice in his mind meant simply reason at work in society. It was Hosea's genius, as we have noted, to observe that the same appeal to the universal that characterizes men's rational life is found in the deeper reaches of their most intimate emotions. And finally Isaiah with his analysis of humility before God added the final metaphysical comment. Religion, he said in effect, is respect not only for that which binds us together both in our thinking and our suffering, but for that which in the sublimity of its rational and ethical qualities confronts us as a stimulus to the will.

I find it hard to understand why this kind of belief should be assailed as insufficient to meet the strains and stresses of our time and equally hard to see what could be put in its place. Is reason "egocentric" as the critics claim? Yes, in a sense, but only as all our thinking and feeling is egocentric. It is impossible for anyone to become completely objective. But how shall we cure our egocentricity except by looking at it, analyzing it, and summoning our energies to overcome it? How shall we understand the sublimity of justice unless like Amos we study its analogies in nature and history? Does sectarian or national or class ambition infect our efforts to establish the rule of love? How again shall we correct this except by probing with Hosea into the universal traits our suffering exhibits? Does pride corrupt our efforts to reach the truth and to apply the law of charity? What better means have we of combatting it than through the humility Isaiah taught, a kind of humility based not on cringing obeisance, or fear of

what we do not know, but rather on an awareness of the moral struggle the truly sensitive heart and mind must face?

Man is born into a world that seems irrational. With what tremendous force this truth assails us today! He is placed in a universe where a larger purpose is something that is desperately hard to discover. Yet within himself, miraculous as it seems, he finds the desire for order and reason, and in the midst of his deeper impulses he discovers a craving for a purpose that is inclusive. It is true that his own desires in themselves provide no final evidence. Yet as he analyzes them and finds the conditions in which they thrive he becomes vividly aware of an insistent claim laid on him that he can in no wise escape or deny. Standing over against his desires and providing the conditions by which they must be judged is a network of relations which the most sensitive minds of the race have explored and have found full of significance. To know this gives modern man a conviction of the bond that unites him with kindred spirits in his own land and other lands, in his own age and in ages that have passed. And the fact that some of these kindred spirits can speak across the centuries words that strike fire in his heart gives him a new conviction that he and humanity are not alone.

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